

From: (b)(6)
To: Swenson, Peter; (b)(6)
Subject: Re: Your email message regarding the Back Forty Project
Date: Tuesday, May 09, 2017 2:40:31 PM
Importance: High

Peter, I can't thank you enough for the update on the permitting process for the Back Forty mine project on the Menominee River. It's of comfort to those opposed to this environmental threat to such a large and vital watershed that the EPA has monitored and provided objections and comments at all the various permit application stages.

While the MDEQ has an obvious bias toward giving extractive industries far too much latitude concerning their operations, I feel there may be some hope for thwarting this mammoth mine based on the EPA's efforts, grass-roots organizations appeals and journalists like myself trying to expose the DEQ's slidshod approvals under the guise of doing proper scientific and environmental studies. Any support for those efforts is deeply appreciated.

In addition, those of us who have reported on and value the indispensable work of the EPA over the last few decades hope that the burden of an administration working against the efforts of this agency to protect our environment and the health and safety of all Americans will be short-lived, and its abominable tactics rescinded. Keep the faith and keep up the good work.

Regards,

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From: Swenson, Peter <swenson.peter@epa.gov>
Sent: Friday, May 5, 2017 12:30 PM
Subject: Your email message regarding the Back Forty Project

Thank you for your recent email message expressing concerns about the proposed Aquila Resources Inc. Back Forty Project in Menominee County, Michigan.

As currently proposed, the Back Forty Project requires a number of permits, including permits required by federal statute. The State of Michigan has the authority and responsibility to review permit applications and issue these permits. In its oversight role, EPA reviews the

State's permits to ensure their consistency with federal statutes. EPA has engaged with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) on each of the following permits required by federal law:

Clean Air Act Permit: During the public comment period, EPA stated its concerns with some of the draft air construction permit conditions. As part of its permitting process, MDEQ provided a response to comments document addressing EPA's comments and all comments received during the public comment period at time of final air construction permit issuance. MDEQ revised certain permit conditions to address EPA's concerns.

Clean Water Act Section 402 Permit (wastewater discharge permit): EPA provided comments on the draft permit during the public comment period. MDEQ provided a revised permit and the State's responses to comments. EPA provided additional comments to MDEQ on the revised permit. EPA's comments were focused primarily on toxicity testing and ambient monitoring requirements. EPA's comments were accepted by MDEQ and incorporated into the permit before it was issued on April 5, 2017.

Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit (wetlands permit): In August 2016, EPA objected to MDEQ issuing a 'Wetlands and Inland Lakes and Streams Permit.' Aquila Resources Inc. subsequently withdrew its MDEQ permit application. In January 2017, Aquila Resources Inc. re-applied to MDEQ. After MDEQ completes review of the application for completeness, MDEQ will issue a public notice, at which time, the public, tribes, and EPA will have an opportunity to provide comments. EPA will provide a thorough review of the revised permit application at that time.

Michigan also maintains state authority to issue mining permits under Part 632 of its Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act. EPA does not have

authority to oversee the State's Part 632 permits. If you have formal comments you wish to make, we recommend you submit them to the MDEQ within the relevant comment periods.

EPA is committed to ensuring that permits issued by MDEQ for the Back Forty Project comply with applicable federal environmental protection laws.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Peter Swenson
Chief, Watersheds and Wetlands Branch
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5